

The World of Stick and Leaf-Insects in Books, some general remarks.

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Key words

Stick and Leaf Insects, Books.

Book hunting can be a very enjoyable pursuit, particularly when the unexpected turns up. In recent years the increased interest in keeping stick and leaf-insects as pets has helped to increase printed matter on these insects, and these books are generally easy to track down. However, the pursuit becomes more interesting when a book is located which is not widely known for its content on phasmids. The book is even more fascinating if the content includes an exciting tale or two about the insects!

The serious book collector, including myself, will search for volumes such as Westwood's excellent book published in 1859. The black and white plates are magnificent and one can easily track down the type specimens in the Natural History Museum and Oxford University Museum collections. Some years ago I paid a lot of money for a mint condition Westwood and have since purchased a bound volume containing just the plates. So far, an original of Brunner and Redtenbacher's monograph (1906-08) has eluded me, despite searches all over Europe. However, there is always hope for the true book collector that one day he will come across a dust covered volume in a bookshop. Gray's 1835 Synopsis (48 pages, no illustrations) is just too easy to find; I know a source with several copies in virtually mint condition!

Before I deal with some of the tales in a few of the books tracked down, let's firstly look at some recent books, which have followed Brunner and Redtenbacher's monograph. Most serious phasmid enthusiasts will possess most of these:

Anon. (1970) *Rearing Stick Insects*. AES Leaflet No. 30. PB, 20 pages. A basic breeders' guide; replaced by Brock (1985), although a slightly enlarged reprint was sold in between.

Clark, J.T. (1974) *Stick and Leaf Insects*. B. Shurlock & Co., Winchester. 65 pages. A useful introduction to phasmids (including rearing 11 species) which has long been out of print. Originally published in hardback, a paperback followed before copies were on sale in some remainder bookshops. It sometimes turns up in bookdealers' lists, with inflated prices due to the demand.

Brock, P.D. (1985) *The Phasmid Reeler's Handbook (Stick Insects and Leaf Insects)*. AES volume 20, PB 41 pages. A popular breeder's guide, out of print and replaced by my 1992 updated version. Odd copies are still around, I saw one recently at Dillon's Bookshop in Watford.

Floyd, D. (1987) *Keeping Stick Insects*. Deanprint Ltd, Cheadle Heath. PB, 60 pages. A basic beginner's guide, covering seven species. Self published book by a trader, it includes colour photographs.

Mazzini, M. & Scali, V. (eds) (1987) *Stick Insects: Phylogeny and Reproduction. Proceedings of the 1st International Symposium on Stick Insects, Siena, Italy, September 30th - October 2nd 1986*. University of Siena and University of Bologna, Italy. 224 pages. It includes a wide variety of papers, two by PSG members: Clark Sellick (eggs) and Brock (British stick insects).

Byron, M. (1988) *How to keep Stick Insects*. Fitzgerald Publishing, London. PB 21 pages. A basic beginner's guide which discusses eight species. The text is too preoccupied with elaborate descriptions of each species. Out of print, but a few copies are still around.

Peltier, M. & others. (1989) *Gespensschrecken*. Naturmuseum Olten. 25 pages (in German). I only have a photocopy of this well illustrated booklet.

Brock, P.D. (1991) *Stick-Insects of Britain, Europe and the Mediterranean*. Fitzgerald Publishing, London. 50 pages. A comprehensive, illustrated account, including keys to species, maps, habitat

and foodplant drawings. Attractive colour cover.

Salmon, J.T. (1991) *The Stick Insects of New Zealand*. Reed Books, New Zealand. 124 pages. A magnificent study, with beautiful watercolours of adults.

Alderton, D. (1992) *A Step-by-Step Book about Stick Insects*. TFH Publications, worldwide. PB 64 pages. A basic beginner's book with a lot of colour photographs which vary in quality. Part of the TFH series widely available in pet shops.

Brock, P.D. (1992) *Rearing and Studying Stick and Leaf Insects*. AES volume 22. Amateur Entomologists' Society, Feltham. PB 73 pages. A comprehensive introduction to the subject, dealing with many species in culture. Also includes details on the structure of these insects, breeding, collecting and preserving them. Illustrated by line drawings and black and white plates.

Other modern books including colour illustrations of phasmids are wide ranging. Well worth obtaining for their content on British species are: Ragge (1965), now very expensive, but watch out for ex-library copies, and Marshall and Haes (1988). General guide books to insects of particular regions or countries sometimes include stick-insects, although the information given is sometimes very inaccurate. A good guide to breeding exotic insects is Löser (1991); published in German, it includes fine colour photographs of nearly all of the 21 species of phasmids included. Stone (1992) follows on from the well known *Butterfly Culture* by Stone and Midwinter (1975). The author is not always accurate with the information given, but he has a good track record with leaf-insects and there is a useful section in his 1992 work. Sharrell (1971) includes an interesting chapter on New Zealand stick-insects, and Hughes (1975) an excellent account of *Didymuria violescens* from Australia. Unno (1989) is an excellent photographic account of certain Malaysian insects. The brief text is in Japanese with an English summary. For an enjoyable read about Australian garden insects, I can thoroughly recommend Clyne (1979). Preston-Mafham (1990, 1991) is well known for his excellent photography.

I recently obtained a copy of *Praying Mantids and Stick Insects* by Schoeman (1985). This 47 page book is published as part of the De Jager-Haum *Insight* series, and provides a lively account, pages 26-42 dealing with stick-insects. I was hoping for a stick-insect on the front cover, but instead found mantids on the front and inside covers! There are several good colour photographs of South African stick-insects, although two are posed set specimens. The text is fairly general, including notes on morphology, colour change, aggression, chemical defence, etc. Some comments are inaccurate e.g. *Prisopus flabelliformis* of Brazil "spends the whole of the day under water, in a stream or rivulet..."; this has long been disproved. The author has a habit of describing some stick-insect species as leaf-insects, following on from his attempts at describing the classification of the order. Very much a general study, the book is by no means technical and only briefly mentions specific South African species and their habits. The series is therefore perfectly suitable for the general public, who may well collect the series of books. A few of the sketches included in the book may also be found in the author's brief notes on pages 96-98 of *Insects of Southern Africa* (Scholtz & Holm, 1985). Unfortunately I cannot offer much practical advice to people seeking a copy of *Praying Mantids and Stick Insects*, the publishers did not respond to my letter and my own copy was eventually obtained following its purchase at a South African shop by a third party for a UK bookdealer. I have since found a UK distributor who can obtain a supply from South Africa. I am prepared to collect bulk orders for these and if interested please forward a cheque for £8.00 payable to "The Phasmid Study Group" . Add £1.00 if you live outside the UK. **N.B. Deadline: 31st July 1993.** Books have to be ordered from S. Africa and should be supplied in about three months. The first few orders should however be supplied from stock on a first come, first served basis.



Figure 1.

On trips abroad, foreign language books can be interesting. This includes a Japanese colour plate book on insects, obtained in Malaysia. Fortunately the text is short! Even unexpected sources can include stick-insects. Braack's 1983 travel guide to the Kruger National Park in South Africa (only 50p from a "bargain" bookshop in 1992) includes a fine colour photograph of a male *Palophus* sp., with tips on where to locate stick-insects. The author comments that "stick insects are more common than is often thought". Text books on insects provide an interesting insight into phasmids, with excellent coverage in the revised CSIRO *Australian Insects* volumes (1992). Another much

older example is Sharp (1910). Modern encyclopedias on insects are also useful, good examples including Stanek (1969) and Linsenmaier (1972). For fine colour plates on the African *Palophus reyi* see Skaife (1979).

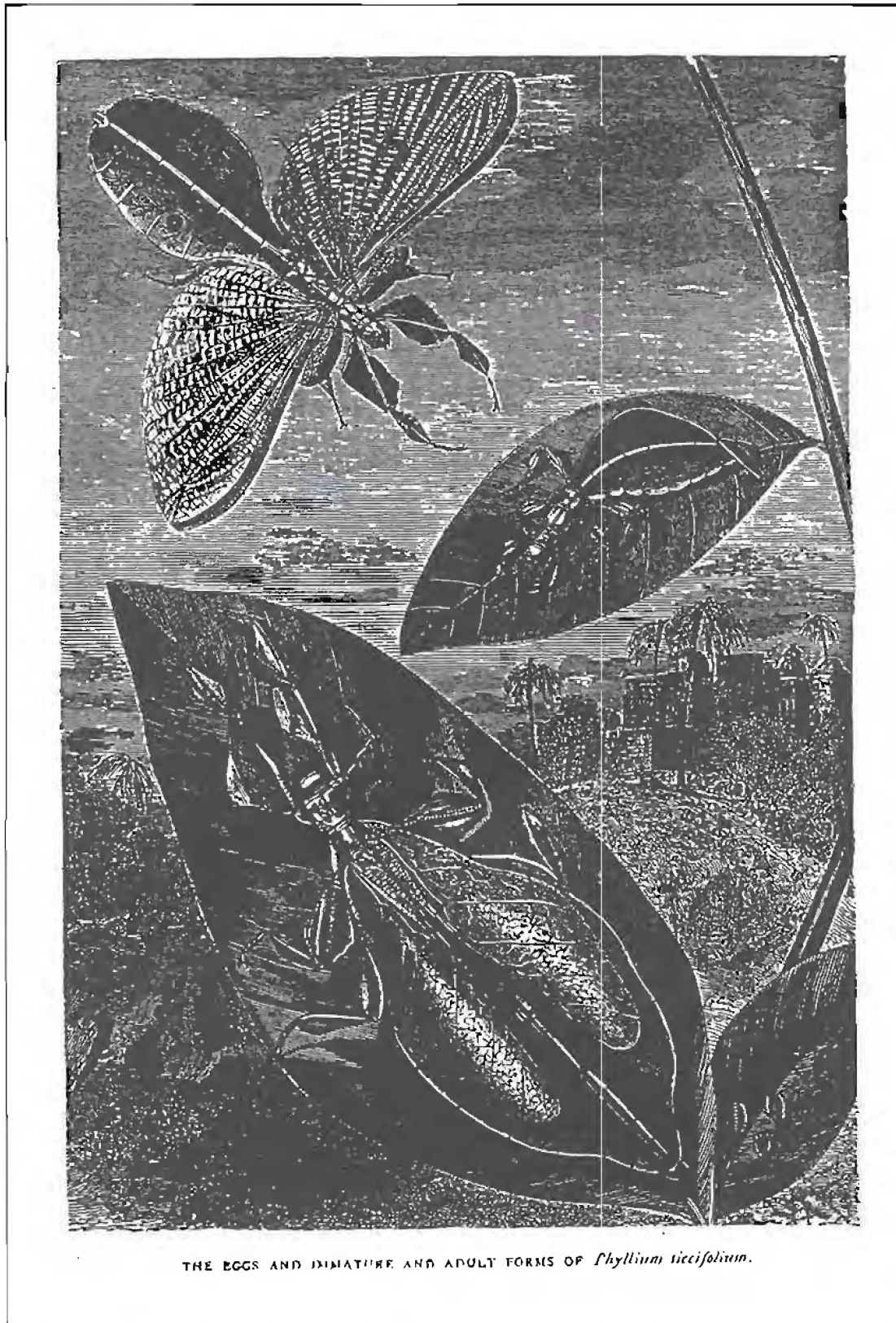


Figure 2. Black and white plate from *The Transformations (or Metamorphoses) of Insects* by P. Martin Duncan.

Now for the "tales"! Many insect books contain sections on phasmids and below are a few of the more exciting finds.

Whilst hunting for insect books on a holiday in Wales a few years ago, I came across a rare beetles volume, subsequently on-sold to a foreign bookdealer. For a mere £2.50 I also found *True Tales of the Insects* by Baednoch (1899). The Orthoptera are very well covered in the first 159 pages of this 255 page book. Phasmids are dealt with in chapters three and four, pages 41-80. On page 45 one learns "They devour the leaves, and especially the young glutinous or gummy shoots of the plants on which they reside, and with a voracity so excessive that a single pair will destroy a great quantity of foliage, so that in some parts of the world where they abound they become very injurious. This occurs in the South Sea Isles, in the case of *Graeffea coccophagus*, a brown slender species, which sometimes commits dreadful devastation in the plantations of coconut trees, occasioning scarcity of food, and orders have been issued by the chiefs for their destruction. One writer goes so far as to ascribe the cannibalism in some of these islands to want of food caused by the ravages of this insect.....". Other tales include reference to a well known story about a Brazilian *Prisopus* species living submerged in mountain streams (also mentioned in Schoeman (1985), see above). This was later dismissed in scientific papers. There are lots of stories on various stick and leaf-insects, combined with good illustrations.

Whilst book hunting in 1992, I located *Insect intruders in Indian Homes* by Stebbing (not dated), which has a fine frontispiece (Figure 1). The stick-insect, almost certainly a *Carausius* sp., described as originating from Assam, is eight inches in length. There is a story about leaf-insects on page 118: "By the way, while on district work in Eastern Bengal some years ago a native brought me one of these insects. On instituting a few inquiries as to where I might procure some more, I was told that the trees were fairly common in those parts, and that this particular one was only one of the leaves which had taken to walking! I fancy most of us in Eastern Assam have been told this simple yarn at one time or another - there is little doubt that the native believes it." At the same bookshop I also obtained a nicely bound 164 page thesis, in French, by de Sinéty (1901), entirely on stick-insects.

The Naturalist's Library is a very collectable series of books published in the late 1800's and Duncan's *Entomology*, Volume 28 (not dated) includes three fine handcoloured plates on phasmids; well worth hunting for. I could digress further with more stories, but these are just a small selection of examples one can come across when book collecting. Warning: if you decide to become a bibliophile, beware of the urge to constantly add more to your collection. Not only will your pets take over the house, but you will need more and more bookcases. Beware again! If you are like me, you will also collect scientific papers on phasmids which again multiply rapidly and contain even more fascinating stories in some instances.

Note - I stress again that this is by no means an exhaustive account of books which include reference to stick and leaf-insects, but merely a personal selection of some of my favoured titles.

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